

October 18, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KOMER
AMBASSADOR LEONHART

SUBJECT: Statistics

1. You asked for an analysis of the charts and statistics in the back of the CIA Situation Report of 14 October. They do not in themselves suggest a clear trend towards either victory or defeat. Rather they seem to me to confirm a general pattern of stalemate which re-emphasizes the key point - the point Hanoi never forgets: ultimately the winner will be the side with the greater will to continue the battle.

2. On specifics:

- a. Weapons loss - In 1963 and 1964 and the first seven months of 1965, we lost more weapons than we captured. This statistic was reversed in September 1965, and since then the weapon ratio has generally been in our favor. Since May it has been in our favor by an increasing margin.
- b. VC "attacks" - The general level for 1966 has remained very close to that of 1965, although there has been a sharp drop-off from 1964.
- c. Recorded VC "incidents" - These rose steadily to the beginning of 1966 and then dropped off sharply this year. They are presently running at about the same rate as the fall of 1965.
- d. South Vietnamese desertions have been running at an alarmingly high rate, although there has been an encouraging drop-off in the last three months.
- e. The Chieu Hoi rate, after picking up at the beginning of 1966, has leveled off and now is running at about the same rate as late 1965. At the current rate, we will probably end the year with about 17,000 to 18,000. It must be pointed out, however, that as a rate per thousand enemy, the Chieu Hoi rate has fallen off sharply, if one accepts the MAC/V enemy OB statistics.

- f. VC/NVA personnel losses - This statistics, as the chart in the CIA book indicates, has fluctuated considerably on a monthly basis since last fall. The estimated VC/NVA killed and captured are as follows:

| <u>Month</u> | <u>Total KIA/CIA</u> |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Oct. 1965 | 4534 |
| Nov. 1965 | 6108 |
| Dec. 1965 | 4592 |
| Jan. 1966 | 3236 |
| Feb. 1966 | 5235 |
| Mar. 1966 | 6289 |
| Apr. 1966 | 3301 |
| May 1966 | 4891 |
| June 1966 | 5567 |
| July 1966 | 5976 |
| Aug. 1966 | 6781 |
| Sept. 1966 | 5286 |

Enemy losses from wounds and desertions are not recorded above because they could not be counted accurately. MAC/V and the US Intelligence Board now estimate that there are 1.5 enemy wounded for each enemy killed and one-third of the wounded are out of action for at least a year, resulting in 1300 additional losses per month. They also estimate that there is one unrecorded military deserter for each military deserter, resulting in another 1100 losses each month. These figures strike me as somewhat cautious, particularly the 1.5:1 wounded to killed ratio. However, these are the official US intelligence figures and, regardless of the exact ratio, they present a picture of relatively constant losses for the enemy despite our steadily rising force levels and fire power. To demonstrate this point, here are the VC/NVA losses based on the monthly average in thousands for the last six quarters (including estimates for WIA and deserters):

| <u>1965</u> | | | <u>1966</u> | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|------------------------|
| 2nd Quarter | 3rd Quarter | 4th Quarter | 1st Quarter | 2nd Quarter | 3rd Qtr. | Qtrs, <i>Last Flow</i> |
| 5.0 | 7.5 | 9.6 | 9.8 | 8.6 | 10.1 | 9.5 |

It can thus be seen that enemy losses have remained relatively constant over the last 12 months despite a 22% increase in GVN/US/ FWMAF forces (from a fourth quarter 1965 average of 875,000 to a September 1 total of 1,065,000) and a 13% increase in enemy forces according to MACV/J2 (from 248,000 to 281,000). Recorded enemy

losses per 1000 friendly forces have fallen from 7.1 in the fourth quarter 1965 to an average of 6.3 during 1966. All this took place during a period in which there was a 44% increase in US/GVN/FWMAF battalion days of operation, 25% increase in battalion size operations with enemy contact, a 28% increase in small unit actions, a 12% increase in enemy contact by small units, the doubling of armed helicopter sorties from 14000 to 28000 per month, and increase of in-country attack sorties from 12,800 to 14,400 per month.

3. What has happened to GVN losses over the same period of time? Every statistic emphasizes their general decline. In 1965 a weekly average of 812 Vietnamese were killed, wounded, missing, or captured. During the first six months of 1966, this figure dipped to 600 a week. In September of 1966, the GVN had 556 KIA, their lowest figure since June of 1964. I do not have a breakdown available by ARVN, RF, and PF, but it would definitely show RF and PF taking the bulk of the casualties.

From August to December of 1965, the US lost an average of 315 killed and wounded per week. During the first six months of 1966, this figure rose to an average of 674 (the total GVN/US/FWMAF casualties have remained at about the same level as last year).

4. The critical question is: what is happening to the enemy order of battle? Using both MAC/V and CIA intelligence estimates, and adding into them these statistics cited above, one comes up with a rather pessimistic view of the situation. If, however, these enemy OB figures are seriously wrong, as Joe Alsop and others have charged, then the situation is not so bleak. In sum, these statistics reemphasize the critical importance of our OB figures, and make the question of their validity the central one.

Richard Holbrooke